Furnishing the Modern Metropolitan: Moriya Nobuo's Designs for Domestic Interiors, 1922–1927

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Introduction

Once Japan began intensive diplomatic and trade relations with Euro-American powers after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, engaging with modernity meant reordering all spaces, objects, and practices in a dualistic schema of either imported "Western" or vernacular "Japanese" ones, in which the imported most often was associated with modernity, and the vernacular with tradition and the past. While both terms were, in practice, hybrids influenced by and bleeding each other, and "Chinese" as well as other Asian styles formed an ambiguous third sphere, this dualism would regulate material culture, the visual and performing arts, and greater social structures for the next century, and to a great extent continues to do so today.[1] The furniture and interior design industries were no exception, and public spaces including schools, government facilities, offices, and public transportation had been refitted with chairs and desks by the late-nineteenth century. Domestic interiors also could be furnished in either "Japanese" or "Western" style, determining the clothing and manners of its occupants.[2] And the Western-style interiors omnipresent in department store displays and the new media of photography and cinema were a key part of new urban visual and consumer culture.

This article introduces two of Tokyo-based furniture designer and interior decorator Moriya Nobuo's (1893–1927) prescriptions for the domestic spaces of modern Japan: "Small Interior Art" (*Chiisaki shitsunai soshoku*), a 1925 design manifesto in the form of model rooms, and a line of inexpensive mass-produced furniture by the furniture design group Kinome-sha, which Moriya co-founded in 1927.[3] Radically different in target, style, expense, and degree of sophistication, both "Small Interior Art" and the Kinome-sha furniture were responses to the hybrid conditions of modern urban Japan. Both projects were a challenge to the furniture industry, and a sign of the direction in which Moriya hoped the environment and practices of daily life in Tokyo would move. With a retooled furniture industry allowing all Tokyoites to enjoy modern Japanese interiors at home, albeit ones which recognized and reaffirmed new class divisions,

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Moriya hoped to furnish modern metropolitans (and the modern metropolis) with proper settings for their lives.

Moriya's interest in modernization beginning in the home was anything but coincidental. For those charged with shaping Japan into a modern nation in the early twentieth century, the home provided a key site from which to modernize the nation through the daily life of its citizens. Introducing such Euro-American furnishings, forms, and practices as chairs, beds, hardwood floors, and meals taken together around a communal table would, it was hoped, create modern homes, a modern citizenry and, by extension, a modern state.[4] These changes were advocated by bureaucrats from the Ministry of Education, along with influential architects, educators, designers, and home economists trained at new universities and technical institutes organized along Euro-American lines. Reordering the domestic environment along Western-style designs, reformers argued, would not only encourage modern practices among the Japanese, increasing productivity and health, but also would present a "civilized" face to the world, thus helping to secure Japan's position as a modern nation in the world order. As the preface to *Jutaku kagu no kairyo* ("The Reform of Domestic Furniture"), a 1924 report by the Ministry of Education-sponsored Lifestyle Improvement Coalition stated, "The organization and improvement of the style of the traditional ways of life—clothing, meals, housing, and social relations—to a more rational level is the greatest and most urgent task for the improvement of the efficiency of the national lifestyle and, by extension, for developments in the fate of the nation today."[5]

Japan's claim to modern nationhood stood on firmer ground after its victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 forced Europe and North America to recognize a new regional power. Domestically, eating meals around low *chabudai* tables became popular in the 1910s, but the majority of Japanese homes retained vernacular interiors typified by *tatami* floors and *futon* for sleeping well into the 1920s.[6] The Lifestyle Improvement Coalition and other groups in the lifestyle improvement movement recommended single-family freestanding bungalow "culture houses" as the key to a modern and rational "culture life." Those who could not afford a new house were urged to renovate old vernacular spaces into "Western-style" ones.[7]

However, annual double-digit rates of inflation after the First World War precluded home purchases for most consumers, including factory workers drawn to the cities from the countryside by the promise of employment in the textile or manufacturing industries, and the "new middle class" nuclear families of *salariman* white-collar workers and full-time housewives. Thus, the majority of city-dwellers lived in rental accommodations, making renovations not a possibility for most households.[8] And, while department stores such as Mitsukoshi and Takashimaya marketed Western-style furniture to upwardly mobile metropolitans from the early 1910s, and rattan chair and table "visiting sets" for visitors in Western dress became

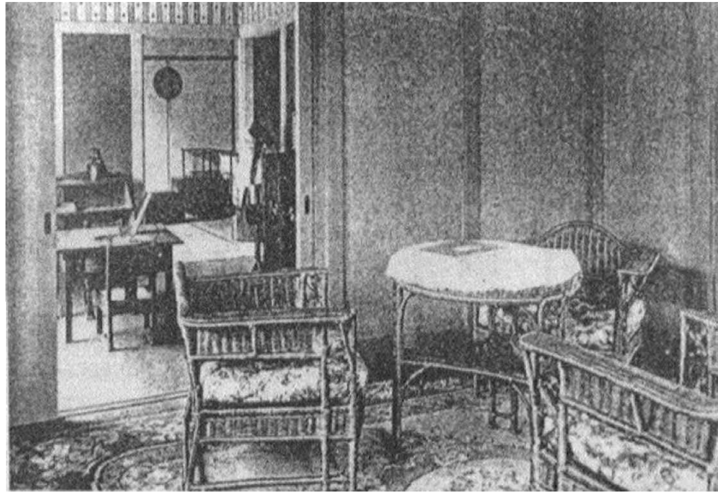


Figure 1
Interior of a Western-Japanese hybrid "culture house" from the 1922 Bunkamura (Culture Village) model home exhibition, Tokyo, Japan, *Kenchiku zasshi* 36 (1922): 427: np.

Figure 2
Moriya Nobuo (1893–1927).

popular furnishings for *engawa* open hallways around the edges of the house, Western-style furniture remained a luxury item for most consumers.[9] Reformers may have recommended Western-style furniture (along with food, clothing, and manners) as economical and efficient, but consumers found wooden chairs, beds, and tables heavy, bulky, and impractical for the small rooms that had to serve multiple purposes. With most floors covered in *tatami,* consumers resisted buying chairs and beds on the grounds that their designs clashed with the vernacular Japanese aesthetic of *tatami* rooms, that chair legs might scuff the delicate *tatami* surface, and that chairs and beds were simply not necessary for a life lived on the floor.[10]

A product of this geo-political background and socio-economic reality, Moriya Nobuo was a tireless campaigner for the adoption of Western-style furniture and interiors. Moriya was a firm believer in the prescriptive power of interior design, and saw the key to conversion as not only enlightening potential future users, but also improving the quality of the product itself. His designs incorporated and manifested his complex politics, reflecting an expressionist need for art, beauty, and emotion in daily life, a modernist concern for rational use and production, and an evangelistic zeal to spread the gospel of good furniture and chair-style living as the key to modernity. With these resided a nationalist desire to "nativize" the modern, thus defining and enabling a specifically Japanese modernity for the sake of Imperial Japan as nation, state, and race.

Prescriptions for the modernization of Tokyo from the inside out, Moriya's designs also were localized responses to specific conditions, events, and populations in metropolitan Tokyo. As such, they plot one way in which design can embody and enable the adaptation, evolution, and deployment of global cultural capital in a specific time and place—a "local" or "alternative" modernity.[11] Thus, Moriya's designs for domestic space—and for its occupants

and creators—offer insight into the role of design as a program for performative modernity, and into the relation between furniture, politics, and social formation.

Moriya Nobuo

Despite his short life, Moriya Nobuo had a profound impact on the development of Japanese interior design and furniture-making in the twentieth century as a teacher, a writer, and a designer. Born in Chiba (east of Tokyo) in 1893, Moriya Nobuo graduated from the design (*zuan)* department of Tokyo Industrial High School in 1915, and began working at Shimizu-Gumi, now Shimizu Corporation, a Tokyo-based construction company. He soon became active in Japan's first professional association of interior and furniture designers, the Kenyokai, and regularly published articles in the Kenyokai monthly journal, *Mokko to soshoku* ("Woodwork and Decoration"), renamed *Mokuzai kogei* ("Woodcraft") in 1923. From 1920 to 1922, he spent eighteen months in Europe and the United States as a fellow of the Japanese Ministry of Education, studying drafting and furniture-making methods, and surveyed the history and current state of the furniture industry, including design education and crafts museums, in Western Europe, Scandinavia, and the United States.[12] He studied English furniture-making history and methods in London, and encountered expressionism and the early Bauhaus in Germany. In the United States, he was greatly impressed by the mass-production methods he observed at furniture manufacturers in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

After returning to Tokyo in June 1922, Moriya began teaching interior design and woodworking at the newly-opened Tokyo Higher School of Arts and Technology (Tokyo Koto Kogei Gakko, now the Department of Design and Architecture of the University of Chiba).[13] He continued to write for design and architectural journals, translated several histories of British furniture, and published a history of ancient furniture and a guide to interior decoration for housewives and students.[14] Ranging from theoretical manifestos to descriptions of historical styles and practical how-to articles, Moriya's writing aimed at increasing public and professional knowledge of Western furniture. Outside of his writing, he toured Japan speaking to women's groups on good furniture in 1926, and gave a lecture on the history of the chair on JOAK, Japan's first radio station, that same year. He also presented his designs at government-sponsored industrial exhibitions in Tokyo. In 1927, he founded the design group Kinome-sha with three colleagues, but fell ill soon after, and died on April 6, 1927, one week before the first Kinome-sha exhibition was to open.

Moriya's later designs and design philosophy were in direct response to the urgent need for housing left by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, and rode the tide of urban reconstruction the earthquake engendered. "Small Interior Art," the earlier of the two

Figure 3
Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu
("Small Interior Art").

projects, was not only a direct response to post-earthquake conditions, but also the product of Moriya's personal reaction to the shock of the disaster.

Small Interior Art

Constructed in two weeks by a team of carpenters, joiners, upholsterers, painters, sculptors, and other artisans under Moriya's supervision for the 1925 National Art Exhibition (*Kokumin Bijutsu Ten*) in Tokyo, "Small Interior Art" presented three model rooms: "Sleeping Beauty's Bedroom (*Nemuri-hime no shinshitsu*)," "A Study Whose Window Reflects a Bird's Shadow (*Torikage no utsuru mado no shosai*)," and "A Dining Room with Red-Lacquered Furniture (*Shunuri no kagu wo ireta shokudo*)." [15] The furniture's fate after the exhibition is unknown, but the rooms were recorded in a catalog of the same name published the following year.[16]

"Small Interior Art" represented a distillation of many of Moriya's beliefs, chief among them the need for industry reform, the importance of art and beauty in daily life, and an understanding of modern Japan as an imperial nation encompassing Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria; and the nativized visual, material, and corporeal traditions of these colonies. The rooms manifest a vision for a lifestyle performed entirely on chairs and in beds, but unlike chair-style model rooms presented by lifestyle improvement groups and department store furniture departments from the late 1910s, Moriya's rooms emphasized not the presence of chairs (and absence of *tatami* mats), but the overall style of each room. A decade earlier, the emerging middle class had been one target of the lifestyle improvement movement's campaign to put chairs in domestic space; now Moriya could shift his attention to what he termed "decoration" (*soshoku*), which allowed expression, as differentiated from mere "furnishings" (*setsubi)* which had only use value.[17]

Moriya's vision also was shaken into place by the Great Kanto Earthquake. Between tremors and fires, the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1, 1923 destroyed 10,558 houses, and turned 3,470 hectares of residential property into wasteland.[18] This included approximately ninety percent of the working-class Asakusa, Honjo, Kyobashi, and Fukugawa wards.[19] The government of Tokyo, under the leadership of new Secretary of the Interior Goto Shinpei, viewed the earthquake as a chance to institute an ambitious city plan through the implementation of a new infrastructure. Meanwhile, thousands of Tokyoites needed housing. The government-organized reconstruction board built barracks for immediate relief. Later, those who could afford the change moved into new, single-family dwellings in western Tokyo suburbs made accessible by new train lines completed in the few years leading up to the disaster (and often developed by the railroad companies).[20] New houses meant a market for new furniture but, for Moriya, as for city planners, the disaster was also an opportunity to renovate the city in line with the modern age (city

Figure 4
Bedroom, "Sleeping Beauty's Bedroom," *Chiisaki shitunai bijutsu.*

planners would work on a macro-scale of streets and bridges; Moriya on the micro-scale of intimate space). As he wrote, this was not only "reconstruction," (*riikonsutorakushon*) but also a chance to be "all the more progressive in the sense of a revolution and improvement in all things."[21]

In "Sleeping Beauty's Bedroom," the first of the three rooms, revolution took the form of fanciful, expressionist ornament and color in an fairytale, theatrical bedroom suite based on the story of Sleeping Beauty. Attempting to "express the beauty and youth of a girl, since the room is meant to sleep a princess from a fairy land," the ivory-colored furniture was decorated with carvings such as the stylized vine, hearts, and crescent moon on the footboard of the bed, and "highlighted" (Moriya) by gold and silver stars.[22] Gold stars in a nebula of darker purple watched over the bed from the light-purple ceiling, and pineapple stencils bordered the vermilion floor, carefully painted one shade darker than the rose wallpaper. Another romantic touch draped a canopy over the head of the bed; the book's accompanying text described this as "a halo like that of Madonna."[23] The room also included a flower stand with flowers, a bedside table with a small box "for a princess—in which to place a ruby ring before going to sleep," a tray, a "charming" lamp inspired by botanical form, and a surrealist-influenced watercolor over the fireplace.[24]

Moriya begins his written commentary on the room by recounting the tale of Sleeping Beauty, adding modern details including a cook who falls asleep while grilling a steak (*bifuteki*), and closes it by stating, "I wanted to describe a quiet, charming princess, and [so I] stepped into the palace of fairytale poetry."[25] The appearance of poetry and expression parallels Moriya's use of expressionist, almost cinematic lines in the furniture. Moriya had encountered expressionism during his time in Germany in 1921, and was among the first and the few Japanese interior designers to champion expressionism as a design movement before the functional modernism of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus established its dominance in Japanese design circles after 1925. Publicly arguing its case in articles in *Mokuzai kogei,* Moriya saw expressionism as a second secession from hidebound historicism along the lines of the Viennese Secession thirty years earlier, and speculated that it might be the prime register for expressing modernity in Japan as well as in Germany.[26] Here expressionism's emphasis on voicing emotion through form was key. As he wrote, "The imitation of nature ended with the nineteenth century. Now, we're raised in nature and it is innately a part of us, so it is all about emotion."[27] The purpose of interior design was to bring beauty and an artistic sensibility to the mundane, hence the work's overall title, "Small Interior Art."[28] That said, the fairytale room's furniture also was to be practical. Moriya emphasized the literally implicit obligation of the applied arts to merge use and beauty, writing, "There is no applied art which has abandoned purpose. There is no use value to be found in art alone."[29] A romantic who hand-painted the inside

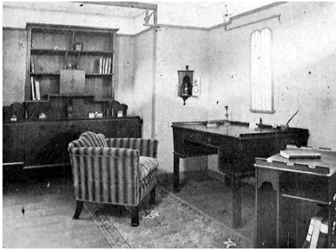


Figure 5
"A Study Whose Window Reflects a Bird's Shadow," Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu.

covers of his books with flowers, and used a hand-drawn fragment of music as the epigram to *Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu,* Moriya also was clearly a pragmatist, at least in theory.

Part of this pragmatism lay in his use of specific designs for specific users. If Sleeping Beauty's bedroom was for a girl, "A Study Whose Window Reflects a Bird's Shadow" was for her father, a salaried worker who, upon returning home from work in the evenings and on the weekends, would want to relax with books in his study. Like the bedroom, the study was furnished entirely with chairs. Unlike traditional vernacular layouts in which a single room might have a number of users and functions, it devoted one room to one person, thus emphasizing the privacy of the occupant. Furthermore, it assumed that its occupant knew how to live in an entirely chair-style space, and that he (for this occupant, too, was entirely gendered) could afford the luxury of a home large enough to accommodate rooms differentiated by occupants and uses. All of these mark the two rooms as solidly intended for the new suburban bungalows in which Moriya himself resided.[30] The tasteful arrays of knickknacks on the study's mantelpiece and bookshelf played to middle class ideals of "taste" (*shumi*) in their references to the cultured leisure activities of collecting or travel.[31] In a housing culture that placed fireplaces in the kitchen, the mantelpiece also recalled the ideal of the hearth as the center of the home, which like taste and collecting had been imported and adapted for domestic use by home economists, department stores, and social reformers in the early 1900s.[32]

Moriya intended the study as a place for the *salariman* to carry on the intellectual pursuits he would have acquired during his university years. As he writes, "It is hard to gain academic knowledge even if one tries, but—and this is the feeling of this room—perhaps it might come just once more, coming in like the shadow of a bird through the study's paper windows." [33] A portable box for books at hand and a bookshelf for permanent storage and display also would contribute to this opportunity. In keeping with the room's intellectual intentions and foregrounded aestheticism, the study's inspiration came from another literary allusion, this time a phrase in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "... now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect." [34] Much like Wilde's birds, Moriya tempered the entirely chair-style study with citations of Japanese design. Taking advantage of his extensive studies of Chippendale in London in 1921, the teak desk referenced Japanese Chippendale but, as Moriya wrote, "It's no problem if it also seems as though it has been influenced by [traditional Japanese] *karaki* [decorative wood]work."[35] An ornamental box mounted on the wall is said to "recall colored Japanese paper and *Nishiki-e* prints." And Moriya upholstered his similarly Chippendale-influenced chairs

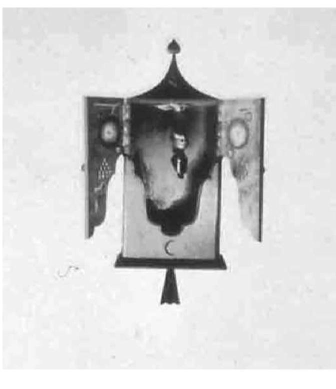


Figure 6
Box, "A Study Whose Window Reflects a Bird's Shadow," *Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu.*

Figure 7
"A Dining Room with Red-Lacquered Furniture," *Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu.*

with highly iconic *Nishijin* textiles from Kyoto, itself a metaphor for tradition in contrast to modern, Westernized Tokyo.

Filtering Japanese style through the japoniste screen of late-nineteenth century English design, Moriya projected a shadow in from the outside, borrowing not only the japonisme of Wilde's England, but the very movement and moment Wilde describes. Perhaps he hoped that, by incorporating Japanese elements into a chair-style interior, the unfamiliar space and furnishings would seem more familiar. He had argued elsewhere "unfamiliarity and novelty breed dislike. Craftwork (*kogeihin*) for the Japanese must have been designed for the taste of the Japanese."[36] This *mise-en-abyme* also might aim at nativizing once-foreign chair-style interiors as Japanese, or as modern Japanese.[37]

It is ironic that Moriya's desire to create furniture that would, as he wrote elsewhere, "express the Japanese national character," occurred here in the reclaiming of traditional motifs recognized in the context of Western design.[38] That said, Moriya himself rediscovered Japanese design after the Great Kanto Earthquake, taking the earthquake—as did the novelist Tanizaki Junichiro, whose *Naomi* is at once a paean to and a warning against the seduction of the Westernized, modern "culture life." [39] He explained the resulting nativist turn in his designs as follows: "I wanted to overcome a way of thinking based on keynotes that stink of the West, and to express the feeling that 'He's Japanese after all.'"[40] However, steeped in Western furniture practices and the ideology of adopting Western-style, Moriya could only embrace this transition through a movement first outwards, then back in.[41]

Figure 8
Chair, "A Dining Room with Red-Lacquered Furniture," *Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu.*

When the "Japan" invented and produced came back in, it incorporated not only Euro-American and Japanese design, but also Chinese styles that brought Japan's colonial presence in Asia into the home as well. True to its name, "A Dining Room with Red-Lacquered Furniture" presents a table, chair, and sofa finished in red Chinese-inspired lacquer.[42] However, the Chinese motif was only skin-deep; despite its "japanned" finish, Moriya describes his variation on a Windsor chair as "early eighteenth century English country style [given] an Oriental feel" by its red lacquer coat, with the sideboard drawing on English folk historicism. The sideboard also returns to the fanciful decoration of "Sleeping Beauty's Bedroom" with a decorative alcove and a vernacular heart and vine design.

Moriya's use of defined styles such as Chinese Chippendale and expressionism reflects Japanese design education in the early twentieth century, in which (as was most often the case in Britain and North America), designers and architects learned a lexicon of historical styles, then applied them in their work. However, while Moriya made intensive studies of the styles he found most appropriate for Japanese taste (namely Chippendale and Adam), he rejected a devotion to one period or style in favor of flexible *bricolage* that reflected the motion and hybridity of modern Tokyo as well

Figure 9
Kinomesha sakuhin-shu (collection of Kinome-sha works).

Figure 10
Wardrobe, *Kinomesha sakuhin-shu.*

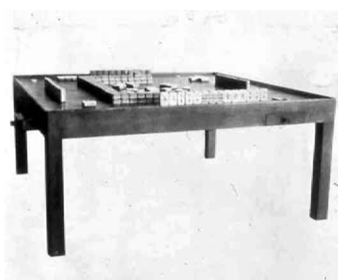


Figure 11.
Mahjong table, *Kinomesha sakuhin-shu.*

as his own identity. For Moriya, these composite interiors were anything but "copying" the West; conversely, the superficial references to traditional styles in what were more commonly considered "Japanese" interiors were only ahistorical repetitions of a historicized vernacular.[43] As he wrote,

> The way of thinking that ... says that the nation of Japan has a wonderful national tradition as Japan, and that it must be preserved, feels lonely to me. Can't we understand that national tradition is fine as such, but that we first see the best of that tradition when looking at it in the context of its age? As Japanese, we carry on the blood of our ancestors splendidly. No matter how hard we try, we cannot distance ourselves from the blood of the Japanese, so even if we make an extra effort, nothing will come of it? ... Think about it calmly, and look at new things with a free and open spirit. When you look at the next thing without being constrained by the specific, can't you clearly see something belonging to the Japanese people even without thinking about style this and national tradition that?" [44]

In this formulation, nation was determined by bloodline, leaving Moriya free to write not of Western furniture, but of "chair-style Japanese furniture (furniture for Japanese that has incorporated Western methods)." This also meant that he could claim these hybrids as the true "modern Japanese design" for modern Japanese lives.[45] Freed from constraints to continue the historical vernacular by virtue of his Japanese blood and modern context, Moriya could employ styles selectively as a palette to express emotion and to create taste, which he saw along with comfort as the most important element in an interior, and as "the most important thing for the houses of the new Japan." [46] However, taste was not the primary goal but, like decoration and expression, an additional step available for those who already had incorporated chairs into all facets of daily life, "Small Interior Art" was for this still-elite group; the Kinome-sha furniture would concentrate on furnishing the others.

Kinome-sha

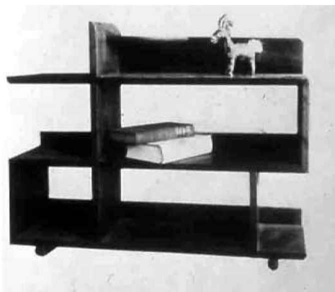
With its central goal of popularizing well-made chair-style furniture for the urban working class, Kinome-sha was an attempt at democratizing the media of daily life. This would happen through steps to increase the practicality of use and production, most of all through a reform in industrial practice emphasizing mass production.

Moriya, Kato Shinjiro, Suzuki Taro, and Moriya's younger brother, Isaburo, founded Kinome-sha, literally "Leaf Bud House," in 1927. Kinome-sha quickly produced a line of prototypes, which were exhibited from April 9–18, 1927 at the Marubishi gallery in the Maru Biru (Building), Tokyo's first modern office block and another prototype of Tokyo modernity.[47] Photographs were then collected

Figure 12
Desk and chair with runners for use on *tatami, Kinomesha sakuhin-shu.*

into a book, published in memory of Moriya.[48] In line with an earlier Moriya declaration that "furniture must be practical and durable, but also comfortable and homelike," the Kinome-sha prototypes covered the furnishings Moriya believed necessary for even modest homes: dining tables, chair and desk sets, wardrobes, bookshelves, mirrors and storage units, and a bed.[49] Some of the furniture (such as the many easy chairs) clearly predicated a chair-based lifestyle; other pieces (such as a wardrobe for Western clothes) demonstrated the understood connection between clothing, food, and housing.

The collection contained some nods to actual working-class daily life, houses, and leisure activities, for example a mahjong table and low *chabudai* tables to use when sitting on the floor. *Chabudai* and children's desks acknowledged newly invented traditions. (The study desk, for example, was introduced into the home as a way to accustom children to sitting in a chair at a desk, as they would do in school.) Designs also took into account the ubiquitous *tatami* and cramped conditions of urban tenements: runners on the bottoms of chairs saved *tatami* from scuffing, and nesting tables saved space. There were some more elaborate stylistic flourishes—bookshelves that cite the *chigaidana* staggered shelves of formal *zashiki tatami* rooms in an arts and crafts rhetoric, an art deco shape to many of the armchairs, and a few tasteful knickknacks on decorative shelves—but most designs were more reminiscent of the pared down aesthetic of Gustav Stickley's arts and crafts furniture.



Figures 13 and 14
Bookshelf inspired by *chigaidana* and art deco armchair, *Kinomesha Sakuhin-shu.*

This simplified aesthetic reflected pared down costs as well. Moriya saw economic accessibility as paramount to popularizing Western-style furniture, writing, "Japan will not adopt chairs until the Japanese are rich enough to afford them; we must make improved furniture affordable or people will not—cannot—adopt it. We must remember the condition of most Japanese houses."[50] Moriya argued that most furniture was either order-made, in which case it was expensive, or cheap, in which case it was of shoddy manufacture.[51] Thus, "Good cheap furniture (Western-style) has been out of the range of ordinary people. How joyful if we could [make it accessible for them]!" Since the simple designs of Kinome-sha furniture would be easier to reproduce, production costs would be cut, and the savings could be passed on to the consumer.[52]

Such attention to streamlining production extended throughout Moriya's philosophy. Calling on the industry to use the Kanto Earthquake as the catalyst for change, Moriya charged furniture manufacturers to replace inefficient prewar production methods with the mechanization and efficient labor practices of mass production.[53] These included standardized dimensions and easily reproducible plans that would allow anyone to make the same object multiple times; these practices were to replace hand methods, a "one artisan per object" custom and factory owners' resistance to footing the initial outlay of mechanization given the low demand for Western-

style furniture.[54] He also recommended increased instruction in Western furniture techniques for artisans, who often made chairs with Japanese techniques; his own educational and publishing activities were the practical application of this philosophy.

With mass-production techniques and labor education making furniture more affordable and increasing the quality of inexpensive furniture, Moriya explained, chair-style furniture would spread across class lines.[55] He used his 1926 national lecture tour to proselytize to regional women's groups on "the democratization of Western-style furniture," and named the democratization of furniture as a barometer of democracy in the state as a whole.[56] In the lecture, which called attention to the historical association of chairs with authority in both Europe and Japan, Moriya drew on examples including the rise of neo-classicism in France after the French Revolution and the eighteenth-century renaissance of English cabinetry after the implementation of the constitutional monarchy to demonstrate a historical correlation between the establishment of a democratic regime and the flourishing of furniture production.[57] Now, it was Japan's turn: "Individuality and self-recognition require a chair-style life, and [in Europe, the United States, and now Japan] have become more and more universal."

However, as the rhetoric of "Small Interior Art" and the Kinome-sha furniture makes clear, if chairs meant democracy for Japan, it was still a nuanced democracy. While a modern, rational chair-style life was the right of all Japanese, artistic expression and tasteful beauty were the property of those who could afford it. At the same time, however, they also were the right of anyone who could afford them; thus, while economically striated, Moriya's vision of democracy through material culture negated older, original ideas of class to create a society in which identity could be consumed, and design could determine identity.

1 This paper intends to offer one example of how the relationship between Japan and "the West" was understood and formulated in one instance of design practice. However, engaging the fine points of the construction of the Japan-West dualism in intellectual discourse is beyond the scope of this paper.

Oguma Eiji's *Tanichi minzoku no kigen "nihonjin" no jigazo no keito* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1995) and *"Nihonjin" no kyokai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Chosen Shokuminchi shihai kara fukki undo made* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1998) are two comprehensive mappings of the formations of Japanese national identity in relation to Asia and the West among intellectuals, and in state policy in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

2 For example, one would wear Western-style clothes in a Western-style room, or when eating a Western-style meal. Conversely, the *kimono* necessitated a Japanese-style room and meal. Western dress was associated with work and school, in contrast to the Japanese dress worn for relaxing in the home. Likewise, men and children wore predominantly Western dress by the mid-1920s, while Japanese dress remained standard for Japanese women (except urban office workers) into the 1930s. These use- and gender-based differences resulted in such user-specific rooms as a Western-style visiting parlor (*osetsushitsu*) furnished with a table and chairs to entertain mostly male visitors in Western dress, and a *tatami* "housewife's room" (*shufushitsu*) or family room (*chanoma,* literally "room for tea"), for a family relaxing in Japanese-style dress or for female visitors in *kimono*.

3 All Japanese names are given with the surname first and personal name last, in accordance with standard Japanese practice.

4 Fujita Haruhiko, "Notomi Kaijiro: An Industrial Art Pioneer and the First Design Educator of Modern Japan" in *Design Issues* 17:2 (Spring 2001): 17-31, provides a detailed example of one pioneer of Japanese design education in the late-nineteenth and early- twentieth centuries.

5 Hirai Yae, ed., *Jutaku kagu no kaizen* (Tokyo: Seikatsu Kaizen Domeikai, 1924), Preface (np). See Kashiwagi Hiroshi, "On Rationalization and the National Lifestyle: Japanese Design in the 1920s and 1930s" in Elise K. Tipton and John Clark, eds., *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 61–74, for an analysis of the relationship between the lifestyle improvement movement and national modernization.

6 Edward S. Morse, *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* (New York: Dover Publications, 1961 reprint of Boston: 1886); Inouye Junkichi, *Home Life in Tokyo* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1985 reprint of Tokyo: 1910); and Jordan Sand, "House and Home in Modern Japan, 1880s–1920s" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1996) provide thorough English-language descriptions of the vernacular Japanese house in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

7 The lifestyle improvement movement (*seikatsu kaizen undo,* also known as the "lifestyle reform movement" or *seikatsu kairyo undo*) began in the mid-1910s, gained attention with the 1918 Lifestyle Improvement Exhibition at the Education Museum in Tokyo, and was strong through the early-1920s. Proponents of the improvement (*kaizen*) and reform (*kairyo*) of daily life promoted its modernization and rationalization, mainly through the adoption of Western-style food, clothing, and housing; as well as the simplification of social customs. Some groups affiliated with the movement were private; others, such as the Lifestyle Improvement Coalition, received sponsorship from government bodies including the Ministry of Education. Similar to early-twentieth century housing reform movements in Great Britain and the United States, the movement's work in housing reform recommended replacing dark, unsanitary, and cramped urban tenements with light, airy housing —ideally single-family suburban homes with a kitchen garden.

See Jordan Sand's "The Cultured Life as Contested Space: Dwelling and Discourse in the 1920s" in *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s,* Tipton and Clark eds., 99–118, for a discussion of the meaning of "culture" and "the culture life" in 1910s–20s Japan. The culture houses recommended by architects and reformers included a combination of a master bedroom, a nursery, a dining room, a study, a visitors' parlor (often combined with the study), a housewife's room or living room, and a kitchen— all arrayed around a central living room or hallway. In theory, culture houses were to be composed of entirely Western-style rooms, however, in practice, most built culture houses contained both *tatami* and hard-floor rooms.

8 This was partially relieved by the implementation of a Housing Association Law enabling financing for home purchases through loan cooperatives in 1922. The "housing problem" (*jutaku mondai*) was one of the most fiercely discussed policy issues in architectural and urban planning discourse circa 1920.

9 One exception to this was the dowry set bought by a bride's parents before her marriage, meant to furnish all necessary goods for a household from towels and floor cushions to clocks and clothing chests.

Mori Junko's "Modern Seating, Modern Sitting: Japanese Women and the Use of the Chair in the 1920s and 1930s" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Royal College of Art, 2002) traces the iconic nature of the rattan chair in 1920s–30s visual culture. Sand, "The Cultured Life as Contested Space" and Jinno Yuki, *Shumi no tanjo* (Tokyo: Keisei Shobo, 1996) discuss department store marketing strategies and pricing scales for rattan furniture.

10 See Sarah Teasley, "The National Geographics of Design: The Rhetoric of Tatami in 1920s and 30s Japanese Interiors" in Samer Accach, ed., *De-Placing Difference: Architecture, Culture, and Imaginative Geography* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Centre for Asian and Middle Eastern Architecture, 2002), 267–276, for a discussion of the arguments for and against *tatami* use.

11 The importance of inquiry into conditions and the creation of "local" or "alternative" modernities is well-recognized in recent scholarship, both on international topics (cf. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001) and in specific reference to Japan (cf. Stephen Vlastos, ed., *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

12 Moriya recorded his impressions and discoveries in a diary, and relayed information to fellow Kenyokai members via regular missives in *Mokko to soshoku.*

13 In 1922, designer Yasuda Rokuzo assembled graduates of Tokyo Industrial High School including Moriya, furniture designer Kogure Joichi, and graphic designer Miyashita Takao to teach at the newly-founded Tokyo Higher School of Arts and Technology. For a comprehensive history of the first twenty years of the institution, its faculty, and students, see Matsudo City Board of Education, ed. *Dezain no yoran jidai: Tokyo Koto Kogei Gakko no ayumi 1* (Matsudo: Matsudo City Board of Education, 1996) and *Shikaku no Showa 1930–40 nendai: Tokyo Koto Kogei Gakko no ayumi 2* (Matsudo: Matsudo City Board of Education, 1998). In this article, I use the English translation given in the school's histories. Kashiwagi translates it as "Tokyo High School of Industrial Art."

14 *Seiyo bijutsu-shi: Kodai kagu-hen* (Tokyo: Taiyodo, 1926) and *Kore kara no shitsunai soshoku* (Tokyo: Taiyodo, 1927).

15 According to the production notes, Moriya spent four to five days designing the interiors, then built the rooms with the help of two firms and fifteen artisans for more than two weeks, taking advantage of a break in lecturing duties while students vacationed in Hakone, a mountain resort at the base of Mt. Fuji. (Moriya Nobuo, "Chiisaki shitsunai soushoku no kokoromi ni tsuite," reprinted in *Moriya Nobuo Ikoshu* (Tokyo: Tokyo Koto Kogei Gakko Mokuzai Kenkyushitsu, 1928), 20–22.

16 According to Moriya's nephew Moriya Nobuchika, much of the furniture is assumed to have been lost when the Moriya home was destroyed in the 1945 Tokyo air raids. The dining room chair was recreated for a 1994 exhibition in Matsudo, Chiba, Japan; and was displayed regularly in exhibitions of prewar Japanese design throughout the 1990s (Interview with Moriya Nobuchika, December 2000).

17 Moriya "Shitsunai soshoku wo kangaeru" in *Moriya Nobuo Ikoshu,* 17–19. The opposition of "furnishings" (*setsubi*) and "decoration" (*soshoku*) is based on class as well, with decoration reserved for the middle class who might be able to afford a life with taste (*shumi*) and culture (*bunka*); the working-class first needed the furnishings that would enable them to achieve a modern, rational, and sanitary life.

18 Suzuki Hiroyuki, *Toshi he* (Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha, 1992), 39.

19 Architectural historian Suzuki Hiroyuki gives the exact percentages as: Asakusa Ward 98%, Honjo Ward 93%, Kyobashi Ward 88%, and Fukugawa Ward 87%. The earthquake also destroyed 20,532 houses in neighboring Yokohama, 21% of the city's total housing stock. Ibid., 259.

20 While migration away from the ruined areas led the city's total population to drop 8.1% in 1924, the population of Tokyo's suburbs jumped 78.8% — double the annual average for the decade in the years after the earthquake— and the suburban population jumped to 30% of the city's two million residents in the years following the disaster. Nagamine Shigetoshi, *Modan toshi no dokusho kukan* (Tokyo: Nihon Editazu Sukuru, 2001), 39, from Nakagawa Kiyoshi, "Senzen Tokyo ni okeru jinko no teichaku keiko" in *Niigata daigaku shogaku ronshu* 14 (March 1981, np).

21 Moriya, "Gei to ri yori mitaru teito fukko ni kansuru kagu no fukko" in *Mokuzai kogei* 57–58 (1923), reprinted in *Ikoshu* 51–57. For Moriya, the earthquake also was a personal call into action. As he explained, "[After my travels in Europe and the United States,] I had thought I would stay lazy and lost in thought for a while, but I had it explained to me by a friend that it had become impossible to think about the issues of the times impassively after the earthquake." Moriya, *Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu* (Tokyo: Kyoyosha, 1925), 2.

22 Ibid., 11.

23 Ibid., 4.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. Steaks were an early, popular import to Japan and, along with cabbage rolls and curry with rice, a symbol of Western-style modernity.
This was not Moriya's first relation of poetry to design. In an article entitled "Views on the Art of Furniture," he stated: "Rooms must tell beautiful poetry." ("Kagu geijutsu-kan," reprinted in *Moriya Nobuo Ikoshu,* 24–27.)

26 Ken Oshima's "Hijiribashi: Spanning Time and Crossing Place" (paper presented at the 2002 Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, April 2002) discusses the equally controversial use of expressionism in Japanese architectural circles during the same period.

27 Moriya, "Hyogen-ha no eikyo wo uketaru kagu shitsunai soshoku wo chushin ni" in *Mokuzai kogei* 49 (1923), reprinted in *Moriya Nobuo Ikoshu,* 71–75.

28 Moriya's emphasis on expressing inner emotion suggests an influence by aestheticism, however, depending on the client, he also espoused an interior decoration philosophy of expressing personality or taste, as in Charles Eastlake's *Hints on Household Decoration* (1878), or Elsie de Wolfe's dicta on style in the early 1900s. His 1927 interior design manual for housewives and interior decoration students, *Kore kara no shitsunai soshoku,* dictated that housewives should express their personality through the design of their homes, suggesting possible divisions between taste and emotion depending on gender and class.

29 Moriya, "Shitsunai soshoku wo kangaeru," 17.

30 Moriya lived last in a bungalow in Mitaka, west of Shinjuku, and occasionally used details from his house as examples to illustrate his arguments in *Mokuzai kogei*.

31 With its decoration of knickknacks and collectible objects, the mantelpiece is a replica of Moriya's own, as described in the essay "Omocha wo narabeta mantorupiisu wo ete" reprinted in *Ikoshu,* 22–23.

32 From the early 1900s, department stores used the concept of "taste" to promote consumption, and educators and social theorists promoted the adoption of "the family circle." See Jinno and Sand (1996) for discussions and examples of how these two Victorian domestic ideals were adapted for the Japanese context, respectively.

33 The windows' form, inspired by college gothic revival architecture, also might have had this effect (Moriya, *Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu,* 4).

34 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray and Other Writings* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982; reprint of London 1891), 5. The full sentence is "From the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum, whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a beauty so flamelike as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion." While it is unclear whether the translation is his own or that from a contemporary translator, Moriya's version literally reads, "The shadow of a bird flying made the tranquil sunlight coming through the papered screen quiver; it was like a Japanese painting." (Moriya, *Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu,* 4.)

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid. Most likely, this meant being designed by a Japanese designer as well: "[I]f you look at the brushholder and inkwell in the convenient bookcase, you will be satisfied that it is the work of a Japanese." (Moriya, "Hyogen-ha no eikyo wo uketaru kagu shitsunai soshoku wo chushin ni, 73.) Moriya collapsed nation, race, and identity to argue that design expresses national character in other writings as well, for example, in critiques of furniture design in Europe and North America published in *Mokko to soshoku.* In one article published first in the British furniture journal *The Cabinet-Maker and Complete Home Furnisher,* he explained that the Japanese are predisposed by virtue of their national character to like, Chippendale and Adam chairs, but to have an aversion to British painted furniture and modern French furniture. ("A Letter to the Cabinetmaker Editor" in *Mokko to soshoku* 31 [1921], 2–4).

37 See Sarah Teasley, "Nation, Modernity, and Interior Decoration" in *Japanstudien* 13 (October 2001): 49-88. I argue that designers involved with the lifestyle reform movement often adopted strategies of hybridization in which Western-style furniture remained "Western" enough to be exotic and stylish, but also was naturalized as "modern Japanese" so that it might retain some familiarity, and thus be more approachable to consumers.

38 Moriya, "Konseiki ni okeru honpo mokkokai no kenyo," reprinted in *Ikoshu,* 34–7: 35.

39 Tanizaki Junichiro, *Naomi,* trans. Anthony H. Chambers (Tokyo: C.E. Tuttle, 1986). After the earthquake, Tanizaki moved from Tokyo to Kansai, the "more traditional" urban hub of western Japan that includes Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe. Serialized the following year in the *Osaka Asahi Shinbun,* a major newspaper, *Naomi* recounts the obsessive relationship between the narrator, a young company employee, and the quixotic, hybrid, and hyper-modern Naomi, and is known as the author's call to pay less attention to the charms of Western modernity, and more attention to tradition.

40 Moriya, *Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu,* 2–3.

41 This movement, common to many Japanese intellectuals of the period, recalls Franz Fanon's formulation of the postcolonial subject in *Black Skin, White Masks,* trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

42 Originally, the exhibition was to feature six chairs, however the team could produce only one in time for the exhibition's opening.

43 For reasons of space, this article cannot adequately address the issue of Japanese style as historical or ahistorical. Gulsum Nalbantoglu, "Towards Postcolonial Openings: Re-Reading Sir Banister Fletcher's "History of Architecture" in *The Online Forum & Database for World Architecture* (www.worldarchitecture.org/articles/gbn01.htm, nd) is one provocative discussion of the categorization of non-Western architectural styles in canonical architectural history, in this case, British.

44 Moriya, "Kagu geijutsu ron," 26. Kokusui, which I have translated here as "tradition," also can be translated, depending on the context, as "nationalism" or "chauvinism." *Kokusui-shugi,* or "*kokusui*-ism," was particularly strong as a school of thought and design style in the 1930s.

45 Moriya, "Tenrankai kaisai ni tsuite" in *Mokuzai kogei* 50 (1924): 23–27. For Moriya, possession was a matter of making an object, and recognition of that possession a question of familiarization. Thus, "Western-style houses will, in time, be called 'Japanese houses.'" (Moriya, "Shitsunai soshoku no zentei to shite," reprinted in *Moriya Nobuo Ikoshu,* 13–16.)

46 Moriya, "Jurai no nihon jutaku wo sono mama isushiki ni kaeru" in *Mokuzai kogei* 56 (1923): 8–12.

47 The 1923 Maru Biru (Building) was famed in part for its female receptionists, typists, secretaries, and the other working women who commuted to it daily in Western clothing, contributing greatly to the image of the "moga," or modern girl, an icon of 1920s urban Japanese visual culture.

48 Kinomesha, Kinomesha sakuhinshu (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1927). Like the "Small Interior Art" furniture, none of this furniture is known to exist today, but the Matsudo City Board of Education had a table reconstructed for an exhibit in the mid-1990s.

49 Moriya, "Seikatsu no kaizen to kagu no kaizen" in *Mokko to soshoku* 17 (1920), reprinted in *Moriya Nobuo Ikoshu* 38: 36–45.

50 Moriya, "Seikatsu no kaizen to kagu no kaizen," 42.

51 Moriya, "Tenrankai kaisai ni tsuite mite," 23.

52 Contemporary industry commentary often derided furniture makers for their lack of skill. The official history of the Shiba Furniture Commercial and Industrial Cooperative, an association of elite furniture manufacturers and retailers concentrated in the Shiba district of Tokyo, gives the difficulty of turning the curved lines of art nouveau furniture as one reason why this style never achieved the same popularity in Japan. Conversely, the history ascribes the persistence of Secession style to straight lines that could be more easily reproduced. Shiba Kagu Shokogyo Kyodo Kumiai, eds., *Shiba kagu hyakunen-shi* (Tokyo: Tokyo-to Shiba Kagu Shokogyo Kyodo Kumiai, 1966), 164.

53 Moriya, "Gei to ri yori mitaru toshi fukko ni kansuru kagu no fukko," 54.

54 Ibid., 51. Moriya's call for mass production was not an argument for mechanization for mechanization's sake. Far from embracing the machine aesthetic championed by Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus then beginning to make inroads into Japanese design, he saw machines as "no more than an extension of the hand," and believed "mechanization should be used judiciously, where appropriate." Ibid., 53; and Moriya, "Seikatsu kaizen to kagu no kaizen," 36.

55 Moriya's predictions were correct to an extent. The first decade of the Showa era (1925–89), saw increased activity in nativizing chairs and the chair-style life as "Japanese modern," and in making chairs available to all through mass production. State and private interests combined and intersected in organizations such as the government-sponsored Imperial Crafts Association (Teikoku Kogeikai, est. 1926), and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Design Educational Research Center (Kogei Shidosho, est. 1928), which promoted industrial rationalization, and new design groups including former Moriya colleague and modernist architect Kurata Chikatada's Keiji Kobo (est. 1928). While Moriya's interest in European romanticism was replaced by a modernist, functionalist, aesthetic based on ergonomics, standardization and the rationalization of production and use remained guiding tenets for the majority of design groups, and the trend to incorporate premodern design elements into modern furniture only in the 1930s.

The promotion of a lifestyle based on chairs for increased efficiency in the home remained part of these new design movements, and some chairs did take off—desk sets for children are a good example—but production remained largely experimental. Full-fledged mass production did not occur until the 1950s, and the full adoption of chairs in the home would take another wave of middle-class suburban homebuilding in the high economic growth period of the 1960s and '70s to get underway, and a generation raised in houses with chairs that came of age in the 1980s and '90s to truly take root.

56 Moriya, "Yofu kagu no minshuka ni tsuite" in *Moriya Ikoshu,* 109–113: 109.

57 In *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Leora Auslander carefully recounts the relationship between political culture and furniture in France since the Revolution.